



Public domain · Wikimedia Commons

FREE GUIDE · SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL

El Escorial Monastery

Philip II's monastery-palace — the Basilica, the Royal Pantheon and the Library: the 7 unmissable stops, explained one by one



Tickets Visit

tickets and guides to monuments

Your visit at a glance

El Escorial isn't just a monastery: it's the biography in stone of Philip II, the building in which a king set out to sum up his empire, his faith and his idea of eternity. Raised between 1563 and 1584 to designs by Juan Bautista de Toledo and completed by Juan de Herrera, it gathers under one roof a monastery, a palace, the pantheon of the kings of Spain and one of the great libraries of Europe, all in the so-called Herrerian style: bare, geometric and monumental. It's so vast that seeing all of it wears you out; the trick is to go for the essentials. This tour brings together the seven unmissable stops—from the Basilica to the Royal Pantheon and the Library—, with the context to understand why they matter and 1, 2 and 3-hour routes so you can choose according to the time you have. A World Heritage Site since 1984, it rises at the foot of Mount Abantos as a symbol of the power of the House of Austria.

At a glance

PRICE

~€14 general · ~€7 reduced

HOURS

Tue-Sun 10am-6pm · summer until 7pm

STOPS HERE

The 7 must-sees

FREE ENTRY

Wed & Sun afternoons (EU/Latin America)

TIME

2-3 h (all 7 stops)

GETTING THERE

Cercanías C-3 and C-8 from Madrid



Part of Tickets Visit

tickets-visit.com is part of Tickets Visit, the network of tickets and guides to monuments.

With this free guide you already do a great visit: the essentials, with a route. If you want to make the most of it, at the end I'll show you the complete version.

Before you go in: book your skip-the-line ticket

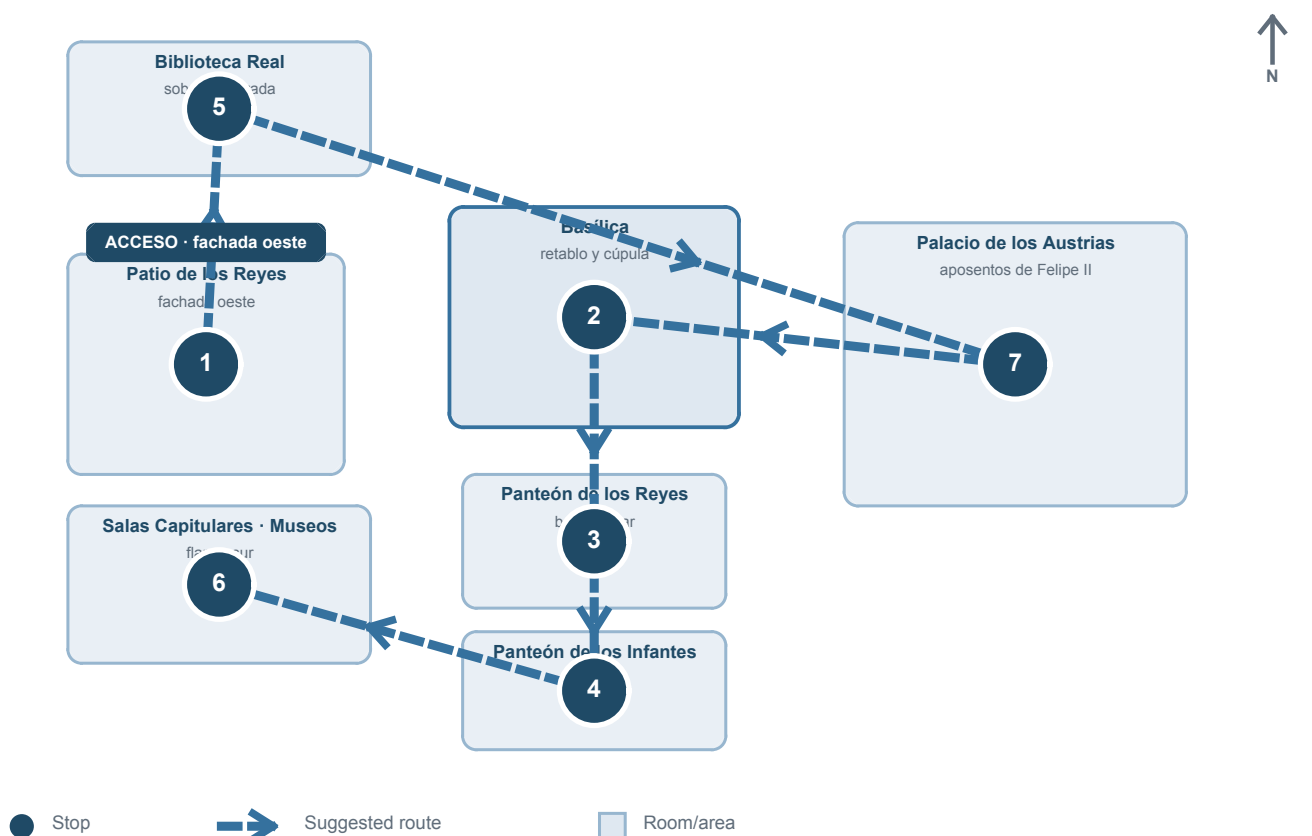
On Civitatis, with free cancellation. Skip the ticket-office queue.

» **Buy your ticket**

The map and the route

You enter through the West Façade, into the Courtyard of the Kings, presided over by the façade of the Basilica. From there, this guide follows this order: the great Basilica with its altarpiece and dome, the descent to the Pantheons (the Royal one and that of the Princes), the Library with its frescoed vault, the Chapter Houses with the picture gallery and, to finish, the austere Chambers of Philip II. Inside, the route is signposted and may change due to works: if it takes you in a different order, jump to the stop that comes up. Set aside 2-3 hours and wear comfortable shoes: there are stairs and long corridors.

MONASTERIO DE EL ESCORIAL · LA PARRILLA HERRERIANA (ESQUEMA, NO A ESCALA)



La fachada principal mira al oeste; la Basilica ocupa el centro, con los Panteones excavados bajo el altar. El Palacio de los Austrias envuelve el ábside por el este (el 'mango' de la parrilla). No a escala.

Visiting order: 1 Courtyard of the Kings and façade › 2 Basilica › 3 Royal Pantheon › 4 Pantheon of the Princes › 5 Library › 6 Chapter Houses and picture gallery › 7 Chambers of Philip II

Schematic layout by area; the number shows the visiting order. Not to scale: follow the museum's own floor plans and signs on the day.

THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

2

The Basilica: altarpiece, dome and cenotaphs

Main church · 25

A Greek-cross basilica with a 92 m dome and a high altarpiece almost 30 metres tall. Flanking the altar, the praying sculptural groups of Charles V and Philip II in gilded bronze, the work of the Leoni.



Interior of the Basilica, with the high altarpiece and the great dome in the background.

Photo: Zvonimir Stamenov · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons



DON'T MISS THIS

The gilded-bronze cenotaphs with Charles V and Philip II kneeling before the altar.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

Beneath the choir there's a sculpture that arrived from Italy and that almost no one stops in front of, with a story of a gift between the powerful behind it. In the premium guide we tell you which one it is and who carved it.

THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

3

The Royal Pantheon

Beneath the high altar of the Basilica · 20

An octagonal Baroque chamber of marble, jasper and gilded bronze, right beneath the high altar. Twenty-six urns hold the kings of Spain since Charles V and the queens who were mothers of a king. Completed in 1654.



The Royal Pantheon, a Baroque chamber with the funerary urns of the Spanish monarchy.

Public domain · Wikimedia Commons



SEE IT LIKE THIS

The golden chamber with the royal urns aligned: kings on one side, queens on the other.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

There's an adjoining room you'll never see and through which every king passes before occupying their final urn. In the premium guide we tell you what it is, how it works and how long the wait lasts.

THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

5

The Library

Above the entrance hall · 25

A 54 m hall with a Tibaldi-frescoed vault of the Liberal Arts. Its most talked-about curiosity: the books are placed with the gilded edge facing out and the spine facing in, for conservation. Thousands of volumes and manuscripts.



The Library, with Tibaldi's frescoed vault and the books placed with the edge facing outwards.

Photo: JI FilpoC · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons



IN DETAIL

The painted vault of the Liberal Arts and the books placed the wrong way round, with the gilded edge towards the visitor.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

Behind its shelves there are manuscripts that reached Spain as booty from an episode of state piracy. In the premium guide we tell you whose they were and how they ended up here.

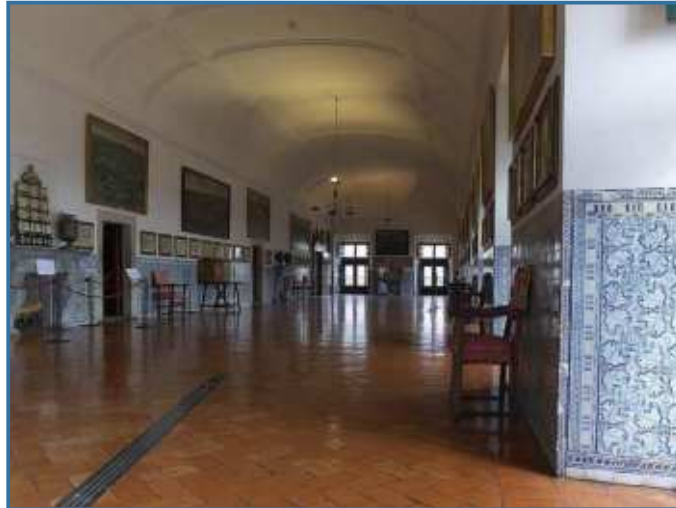
THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

7

The Chambers of Philip II

Palace of the Habsburgs · 20

Philip II's private rooms, surprisingly austere: whitewash, tile and bare wood. A window connected his bedchamber with the altar of the Basilica so he could follow Mass from bed. Here he died in 1598.



The austere private chambers of Philip II, with a direct view onto the altar of the Basilica.

Photo: Jose Luis Filpo Cabana · CC BY 3.0 · Wikimedia Commons



WHERE TO LOOK

The simple bedchamber with the window that looks straight onto the high altar of the Basilica.

» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

The most powerful king of his time chose to die in an almost monk's cell, with an architectural detail designed so as not to miss Mass. In the premium guide we tell you about it in detail.

Practical tips

Best times

Arrive at opening (10:00) to see the Basilica and the Pantheons without crowds; by mid-morning the tour groups fill up. Avoid Mondays: it's closed.

Buy your ticket in advance

El Escorial is one of the most visited monuments in the Madrid mountains and in high season the ticket office gets swamped. Buying your ticket online and booking your time slot saves you the queue and secures your entry, especially at weekends and on long weekends. Arrive a few minutes before your time.

Getting in free

Patrimonio Nacional opens free on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons (15:00-18:00 in winter; 15:00-19:00 in summer) for citizens of the EU and Latin America, and on 18 May and 12 October. Always check on the official website.

With children

The Royal Pantheon and the 'cake' mausoleum of the princes tend to fascinate them; the story of Saint Lawrence's gridiron hooks them. There are stairs and long stretches: better without a bulky pushchair.

Accessibility and services

The monastery has stairs and long corridors; there's a partially adapted route and lifts in some areas, but it's worth checking beforehand which parts are accessible. You'll find toilets and a cloakroom for large backpacks, and cafés in the village, a step from the exit.

Combine it

The Valle de Cuelgamuros (the former Valley of the Fallen) is very close by car. It's a perfect day trip from Madrid on the commuter train (C-3 or C-8) or by bus from Moncloa.

Practical info

How to get there: from Madrid, Cercanías commuter lines C-3 and C-8 (from Atocha, Sol or Chamartín; a little over 1 h, ~€4); El Escorial station is about a 15-min walk from the monastery (there's a local bus). By coach, lines 661 and 664 run by Autocares Herranz from the Moncloa interchange (~€4.20). Guide prices (Patrimonio Nacional): general ~€14, reduced ~€7 (ages 5-16, over-65s and students up to 25); under-5s free. Free window: Wednesday and Sunday afternoons for the EU and Latin America. Guide hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00-18:00 (Oct-Mar) and 10:00-19:00 (Apr-Sep); ticket office and access close about 1 h 15 min earlier. Closed on Mondays. Since February 2026, and due to works, access is via the West Façade / Courtyard of the Kings. Confirm prices, hours and access points on the official website before you go.

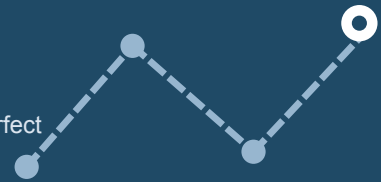
Official website: www.patrimonionacional.es/visita/real-monasterio-de-san-lorenzo-de-el-escorial

PLAN YOUR TRIP · FREE

The Tickets Visit Planner

Build your day-by-day route, discover what to see nearby and plan the perfect itinerary around the city. Free, no sign-up.

» [Open it at planner.tickets-visit.com](https://planner.tickets-visit.com)



Before you go in: book your skip-the-line ticket

On Civitatis, with free cancellation. Skip the ticket-office queue.

» [Buy your ticket](#)

THE COMPLETE VERSION

Take the complete visit

With this free guide you already cover the essentials. The PREMIUM is your complete visit to El Escorial Monastery: every work with its story, a 3-step looking guide for every painting, the cheat-sheet for your phone and the tips to skip the queues. For less than the price of a coffee.

In the free guide you miss out on:

- 1 The Courtyard of the Kings and the Herrerian façade**
Main entrance (West Façade) · 15
- 4 The Pantheon of the Princes**
Next to the Royal Pantheon · 15
- 6 The Chapter Houses and the picture gallery**
New Museums / Chapter Houses · 25

PREMIUM Guide · El Escorial Monastery

€4.99

one-off payment · yours forever

- ✓ All 7 works (the free guide has only 4), each with its story.
- ✓ «What it represents» and «How to look at it» in 3 steps: a looking guide for every painting.
- ✓ The «Route on one page» cheat-sheet for your phone, plus 1-, 2- and 3-hour routes.
- ✓ Contents, keys to understanding it, bios and expanded tips.
- ✓ As a PDF and offline: use it inside the museum without spending data.

Facts checked against official sources · instant download · secure card payment.

Get the complete guide · €4.99

tickets-visit.com/guia-gratis-escorial ›

RISK-FREE GUARANTEE

If the guide doesn't help on your visit, write to us and we'll refund the €4.99. No questions asked.

For comparison: a guided tour costs €30-60 per person. This guide walks you through with the same detail, everyone travelling with you can use it, and it's yours forever.

Still no ticket? Book skip-the-line

On Civitatis, with free cancellation. Skip the ticket-office queue.

» **Check availability and prices**

A guide produced editorially by Tickets Visit. tickets-visit.com is an independent website and is NOT the official website of El Escorial Monastery, nor is it affiliated with it. Images are free from Wikimedia Commons (credit under each one). Information is indicative, checked in August 2026; confirm hours and prices on the official website. Bookings handled through Civitatis (affiliate link).